

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAERA · 26 TEVET 5775 - JAN. 17, 2015 · VOL. 22 NO. 14

PARSHA INSIGHTS

EXPLETIVE DELETED

“I will take you out from under the burdens of Egypt; I shall rescue you from their service; I shall redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments” (1:1)

“**R**av Huna said in the name of Bar Kapara: It was in the merit of four things that the Jewish People were redeemed from Egypt: They didn’t change their names; they didn’t change their language; slander and gossip was not found amongst them, and they maintained their moral standards.” (Yalkut Shimoni, Remez 226)

Hebrew is referred to as the “The Holy Tongue”. It’s holy not just because it was language with which G-d created Existence; it’s not just because it’s the language of the Torah; it’s not only because it was the language spoken by the holiest people who ever lived — Moshe, the Patriarchs and the Prophets.

It’s the only language in the world that has no ‘swear words’.

It cannot be mere coincidence that ‘comedians’ whose lexicon relies so heavily on the obscene and the tawdry rub shoulders with displays of indecency and lewdness.

Morality is the first casualty of a mouth filled with gossip and slander, however ‘funny’ it may be.

The Jewish People in Egypt guarded their mouths not just

against foul language, but also against language with words that were as clean as fresh laundry — but their intent was the assassination of character and social standing.

This is a merit that saved them from Egypt.

As it says in Kohelet, “Man’s entire labor is with his mouth.” (6:7)

Imagine you have a wine cask filled with fine vintage wine. Place a spout on it which is tainted with filth, and the finest wine becomes disgusting. So it is with man. Even someone who is full of Torah and good deeds and prayer, if his language is coarse, even if not obscene, all his virtues become tainted and perhaps worthless.

But even a wine of modest pedigree when cleansed of dross and lees becomes palatable and pleasant. Even if someone may not be a great *tzaddik*, but his manner of expression is pleasant, generous and gentle — he has the merit to escape the “exile of Egypt”.

• Sources: Rabbi Shimshon Pincus; Rambam, *Moreh HaNevuchim Part 3, chapter 8*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

G-d tells Moshe to inform the Jewish People that He is going to take them out of Egypt. However, the Jewish People do not listen. G-d commands Moshe to go to Pharaoh and ask him to free the Jewish People. Although Aharon shows Pharaoh a sign by turning a staff into a snake, Pharaoh’s magicians copy the sign, emboldening Pharaoh to refuse the request. G-d punishes the Egyptians and sends plagues of blood and frogs, but the magicians copy these miracles on a smaller scale, again

encouraging Pharaoh to be obstinate. After the plague of lice, Pharaoh’s magicians concede that only G-d could be performing these miracles. Only the Egyptians, and not the Jews in Goshen, suffer during the plagues. The onslaught continues with wild animals, pestilence, boils and fiery hail. However, despite Moshe’s offers to end the plagues if Pharaoh will let the Jewish People leave, Pharaoh continues to harden his heart and refuses.

YEVAMOT 107 - 113

Rav Papa said, “A verse states (Devarim 5:1) ‘and you will learn (Torah)’ and also states ‘and you will take care to do them (mitzvot) - to teach that one who ‘does them’ is eligible to be ‘one who learn’, but one who does not ‘do them’ is not eligible to be ‘one who learns’.”

Torah and *mitzvot* are tied together in a very special way. If one does not fulfill the *mitzvot* that he learns about in his Torah study, he may be gaining knowledge but is not considered as fulfilling the *mitzvah* to learn Torah and does not merit reward for his study (Rashi). Based on Rav Papa’s interpretation, our *gemara* offers a possible explanation for a seemingly enigmatic statement by Rabbi Yossi in a *beraita*: “One who says ‘I have only Torah’ (and not *mitzvah* fulfillment), does not even have Torah.”

• Yevamot 109b

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani said in the name of Rabbi Yonatan, “When a *dayan* (rabbinical judge) issues a ruling, he should envision himself as if a sword is pointed at his body and *Gehennom* is open beneath him.”

How great is the fear and awe a Torah authority must have when issuing a ruling! This halacha, which is cited by the Rambam shows the utmost “fear of Heaven” and concern for ruling correctly that a halachic authority must possess. (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Sanhedrin 23:8)

Based on this, our *gemara* teaches how a *dayan* should conduct himself if he is not certain of the ruling in a specific case, although he knows the halacha in a similar case. It is of paramount importance that this *dayan* go to ask his Rav for a ruling, if possible. He should not rely on his own ability to derive a ruling by comparing one matter to another. He must go to ask the greater Torah authority. (Rashi)

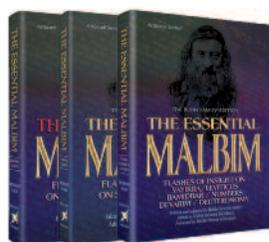
The verse which serves as the basis for Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani’s graphic description of how a *dayan* should “see himself” is in Shir Hashirim (3:7-8). The “60 *giborim*” in the verse are explained differently by Rashi and Tosafot. Rashi explains the “60 *giborim*” (lit. “mighty ones”) as the *dayanim* of the Great Sanhedrin in the Beit Hamikdash. Tosafot claims that the 60 refers to the 60 *ribo* (one *ribo* = 10,000) who stood to receive the Torah at Mt. Sinai. A halachic authority must make the maximum effort to rule in accordance with the truth of the Torah.

• Yevamot 109b

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Did G-d ever appear to Avraham and say "I am G-d"?
2. What cause did the forefathers have to question G-d?
3. How was Moshe commanded to act towards Pharaoh?
4. How long did Levi live?
5. Who was Aharon's wife? Who was her father? Who was her brother?
6. Why are Yitro and Yosef both referred to as "Putiel"?
7. After which plague did G-d begin to "harden Pharaoh's heart"?
8. Why did Pharaoh go to the Nile every morning?
9. Give two reasons why the blood was chosen as the first plague.
10. How long did the plague of blood last?
11. Why did the frogs affect Pharaoh's house first?
12. What did Moshe mean when he told Pharaoh that the frogs would be "in you and in your nation"?
13. What are "chamarim"?
14. Why didn't Moshe strike the dust to initiate the plague of lice?
15. Why were the Egyptian sorcerers unable to bring lice?
16. What were the Egyptians likely to do if they saw the Jews slaughtering lambs?
17. Why didn't the wild beasts die as the frogs had?
18. The *dever* killed "all the cattle of Egypt." Later, boils afflicted their cattle. How can this be?
19. Why did Moshe pray only after leaving the city?
20. What was miraculous about the way the hail stopped falling?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 6:9 - Yes.
2. 6:9 - Although G-d swore to give them the Land, they never actually had control over it.
3. 6:13 - With the respect due a king.
4. 6:16 - 137 years.
5. 6:23 - Elisheva, daughter of Aminadav, sister of Nachshon.
6. 6:25 - Yitro fattened (*pitem*) cows for idol worship. Yosef scoffed (*pitpet*) at his evil inclination.
7. 7:3 - After the sixth plague — *shechin*.
8. 7:15 - To relieve himself. Pharaoh pretended to be a god who did not need to attend to his bodily functions. Therefore, he secretly used the Nile for this purpose.
9. a. 7:17 - Because the Nile was an Egyptian god.
b. 8:17 - Because an invading army first attacks the enemy's water supply, and G-d did the same.
10. 7:25 - Seven days.
11. 7:28 - Pharaoh himself advised the enslavement of the Jewish People.
12. 7:29 - He warned that the frogs would enter their intestines and croak.
13. 8:10 - Piles.
14. 8:12 - Because the dust protected Moshe by hiding the body of the Egyptian that Moshe killed.
15. 8:14 - The Egyptian sorcerers' magic had no power over anything smaller than a barley kernel.
16. 8:22 - Stone the Jews.
17. 8:27 - So the Egyptians would not benefit from their hides.
18. 9:10 - In the plague of *dever* only the cattle *in the fields* died. The plague of *shechin* affected the surviving cattle.
19. 9:29 - Because the city was full of idols.
20. 9:33 - The hailstones stopped in mid-air and didn't fall to the ground.

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Abarbanel

ON PARSHAT VAERA

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

The Parsha begins with the following verse: “G-d spoke to Moshe and said to him, ‘I am Hashem. I appeared to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov as El-Shaddai, but with my name Hashem I did not make Myself known to them.’” (Exodus 6:2-3)

Abarbanel points out that the problem with this verse is that G-d did already use the name ‘Hashem’ (which is the four-letter ineffable name which signifies G-d’s attribute of mercy and Divine providence) many times earlier in prophetic communications with, and in reference to, the patriarchs. Some commentators explain that this verse is a reference to G-d not yet having fulfilled His promise to them of inheriting the Land of Israel. However, the promise itself was not in reference to them, but to their offspring. They also explain that perhaps the verse refers to the miracles in Egypt, something which the patriarchs did not experience. However, this is not a plausible explanation as the patriarchs also experienced numerous and equally miraculous manifestations of G-d’s intervention in nature on their behalf.

Rather, what G-d is telling the people is that the forthcoming exodus from Egypt is an absolute necessity which will demonstrate a whole new dimension of G-d’s providential relationship with Moshe and the entire nation. It is true that G-d appeared to the forefathers as ‘Hashem’. However, their prophecies were never ‘face-to-face’. There was always the intermediary of a dream or a vision. This is what is meant by ‘I did not make Myself known to them.’ The exodus was necessary in order that Moshe and the people, according to their respective levels, would be able to receive prophecy ‘face-to-face’ in order to recognize and truly know G-d’s honor and greatness. In Moshe’s case this is indicated by the verse in Numbers 12:8, “Mouth to mouth do I speak to him, in a clear vision and not in riddles, at the image of

G-d does he gaze.” Unlike all other prophets, Moshe received his prophecy in a state of full consciousness. In the case of the nation in general, the verse in Deuteronomy 5:4 states, “Face-to-face did G-d speak to you on the mountain from amidst the fire.” This is a reference to the dramatic events at Sinai which were witnessed and experienced firsthand by the entire nation. Secondly, the above verse continues, “Moreover, I established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan.” In order to fulfill His promise and further demonstrate His unique relationship with the Jewish nation, G-d has obligated Himself, as it were, to take them out of Egypt and give them the land of Canaan as an inheritance despite its being populated by seven powerful nations.

Finally, the Torah continues with the verse “Moreover, I have heard the groan of the Children of Israel and I have remembered My covenant.” (Exodus 6:5) This is the third reason for the necessity of the exodus from Egypt. G-d will demonstrate that He is the judge of the entire world. Having heard them groaning from their enslavement, it is proper for G-d to carry out a righteous judgment against the Egyptians. When G-d says that “I have remembered My covenant”, He is not referring to the covenant which He made with the patriarchs to give their descendants the land of Canaan. Rather, He is referring to the covenant that He made with Avram at the ‘covenant between the parts’, as the verses state (Genesis 15:13-14) “And He said to Avram, ‘Know with certainty that your offspring will be aliens in a land not their own — and they will serve them and they will oppress them four hundred years. But also the nation that they will serve, I will judge, and afterwards they will leave with great wealth.’”

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Rav Bulman *zt"l*
on the
Torah Portion of the Week

DON'T SAY THAT

From: Melissa

Dear Rabbi,

Is there anything wrong with saying negative things in the form of an exaggeration, or as a manner of speech, when one doesn't really literally mean what he's saying? For example: "I'll go crazy if she tells my mother", or "When you die, your soul goes to Heaven." Is there anything wrong with speaking in a way where the words could mean someone "bad" in a literal sense, but the speaker clearly does not intend anything negative?

Dear Melissa,

The custom is to avoid saying such things. This is often referred to as "One should not open one's mouth to/for Satan".

What we refer to as the uniquely human "power of speech", from a Jewish point of view, is just that – a power.

A misuse or abuse of our power of speech may be harmful to ourselves and others. This is because we are linked through our bodies via the soul to the spiritual realm, which is replete with various forces. Things we do, say and even think have an effect on this realm for good or for bad.

Just as something we do may have a ripple effect or set into motion a chain of events in the physical world, so too things we say impact and ripple through the spiritual plane. The forces thus set into motion ultimately rebound back into the physical plane, much as ripples rebound from the far edge of a pond back to where the pebble was thrown.

In this way, negative speech may boomerang back, and therefore should be avoided.

Thus, in the examples you bring, a person should rather say, "I'll be very upset if she tells my mother" (avoiding extreme exaggeration), or "When one dies, his soul goes to heaven" (avoiding the colloquial "you").

What's more, we find in the Torah that Rachel died in childbirth with Benjamin. There is an idea that this was a result of her having named her previous son Joseph, "because G-d will give me one more son", referring to Benjamin. Her saying it in this fatalistic way is understood to be a contributing cause of her demise.

Accordingly, a person should avoid saying even positive things if it's in a fatalistic context. For example, one should not say, "If I get that job (or get married or have children or see my children married, etc.) I'll have fulfilled my purpose in life" since putting it this way limits the purpose of one's life to the attainment of the goal. Rather, one should say something like, "If I get that job etc., it will be one of the greatest moments in my life, and G-d willing, just the beginning of many great contributions..."

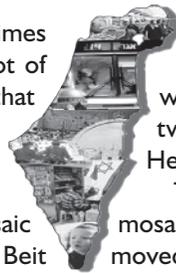
LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

CHEFTZIBA — HOME OF THE MAGNIFICENT MOSAIC

One of the most interesting relics of ancient times can be found in Kibbutz Cheftziba at the foot of Mount Gilboa. It is the magnificent mosaic that decorated the floor of a synagogue built some 1400 years ago on the site where nearby Kibbutz Beit Alpha is located.

It was back in 1928 that the discovery of this mosaic came about while a tractor was digging in the fields of Beit



Alpha. Archaeologists who rushed to the scene uncovered the floor of the ancient synagogue with a mosaic showing the sun encircled by the twelve signs of the zodiac (the "mazalot" in Hebrew).

The government has erected a building over the mosaic to protect it at the kibbutz to which it was moved, and it is now a popular tourist attraction.

Please daven for a refuah shleimah for

Chaim Yechiel ben Malka (Ohr Somayach alumnus Chaim Howard Rothman)

Chaim Eitan ben Sarah - Yitzchak ben Chaya

Shmuel Yerucham ben Baila (Rebbetzin Heller's son-in-law)

May we hear Besoros Tovos.

SHEMONEH ESREI: NINTH BLESSING - PROSPERITY

“Bless on our behalf (“*Barech aleinu*”)... this year...”

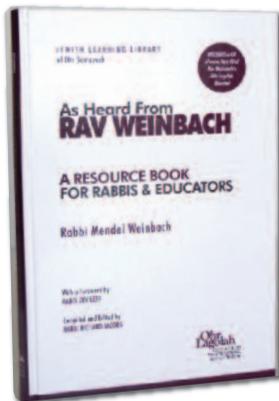
Bless on our behalf

The theme of the ninth blessing of the Shemoneh Esrei is “*parnassa*” – sustenance. In it we ask that G-d bless us with a year of bountiful agricultural produce. In winter, the text has a slight variation. We ask for “rains of blessing” – beneficial rain. Sefardic worshippers begin this blessing during the summer months by saying, “Bless the work of our hands.” During the winter months all begin the same way, with the request as stated above.

Around the time of the Common Era, when the text of this prayer was formulated, livelihood was for the most part based on agriculture – buying and selling crops. For this reason its language directly relates to agriculture. Nowadays, however, most people are not farmers. Today, when we ask G-d to bless our year, we are asking Him to bless our work and grant us success in whatever livelihood we pursue. Our Sages (including Prophets) organized the prayers so they would include in a deeper sense all of the situations a person could find himself in. The intent of this blessing can even include requesting from G-d to send an innovative thought related to one’s livelihood which will enable his success.

This is the only blessing in the Shemoneh Esrai that begins with the word “blessing.” Starting with this word hints to an essential connection between blessing and wealth, which we find in Proverbs 10:22, a verse that also starts with the word “blessing”. There it is stated: “(*Birkat*) The blessing of G-d provides wealth.” This verse relays a deep and fundamental message regarding earning a livelihood.

For most people there are tremendous pressures involved in running a household: the cost of a home, the responsibility to take care of children — which includes schooling and health concerns, and much more. The burden of taking care of all of this may cause a person to worry excessively. For this reason, the verse teaches us that if a person merits Divine blessing his efforts to earn a living will be successful — no matter what. He need not worry at all. This is not a guarantee that everyone will become a millionaire. Rather, each person will receive what he needs from G-d. In fact, wealth is a relative term. Some will receive more, some less. We all, however, have the opportunity to merit G-d’s blessing.



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